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PHOTOS Available from Fish and Wildlife Service.

EXAMINE 1,639 STOMACHS OF 5 SHOREBIRDS TO DETERMINE FOOD HABITS OF THE SPECIES

Food habits experts of the Fish and Wildlife Service examined the stomach contents of more than 1,600 individuals of 5 kinds of shorebirds to determine the food requirements of these feathered creatures, it was reported today. On the basis of these studies, members of the Section of Food Habits, Division of Wildlife Research, said that the diets of the woodcock, Wilson's snipe, American knot, and Eastern and long-billed dowitchers include more than 85 percent animal matter.

More than 620 different kinds of food, were recognized by investigators, each item appearing at least once in the series of 1,639 stomachs examined.

Earthworms were the most important food for the woodcock; insects, marine worms, and mollusks for the eastern dowitcher; insects for the long-billed dowitcher and jacksnipe; and mollusks for the knot. The economic importance of feeding habits of these birds it was shown by the fact that earthworms are an intermediate host of the gapeworms of chicks. Wireworms, which woodcocks also eat, are injurious to grain, strawberries, and other crops.

Marine worms, mostly clamworms, which are enemies of clams, oysters, and other shellfishes, were found in stomachs of all the birds but the woodcock.

A summary of the food habits of these birds shows that the woodcock eats earthworms (67.8 percent), insects (18.3 percent), and plant food that is mostly debris (10.5 percent). The woodcock is especially fitted for obtaining earthworms and fly larvae, the two principal elements of its food, because it has a long, sensitive, probelike beak. The upper mandible is independently movable near the tip, which acts like a forceps and is well suited for extracting particles of food from soft earth.

The Wilson's snipe, or jacksnipe, consumes insects (49.3 percent), crustaceans (11.7 percent), and earthworms (11.3 percent). Its vegetable food (16.7 percent) consists mainly of the seeds of marsh and aquatic plants.

Mollusks form 59 percent of the diet of the American knot, which is usually found nimbly running back and forth on the sand of the beaches and gathering the small forms of animal life uncovered by the receding waves. Other food items of the knot include insects (14.8 percent) and plant material (15.1 percent) largely in the form of seeds of marsh and aquatic plants.

The Eastern dowitcher, which is usually found along the Atlantic coast, and the long-billed dowitcher, found in other sections of the country, both eat insects, which form 29 percent of the diet of the Eastern bird and 70.9 percent of the longbill's food.

Marine worms, mainly destructive clamworms, formed 27.3 percent of the Eastern dowitcher's diet. This is the largest percentage of this particular food so far known for any bird.

A detailed account of the study of the food habits of the 5 shorebirds was issued by the Department of the Interior as Wildlife Research Bulletin 1, entitled "Food Habits of a Group of Shorebirds; Woodcock, Snipe, Knot, and

Dowitcher." Released as a bulletin of the Bureau of Biological Survey, which on June 30, 1940, was consolidated with the Bureau of Fisheries to form the Fish and Wildlife Service, the publication inaugurates a new series of bulletins on wildlife subjects, to supersede contributions on wildlife to technical series formerly published by the Department of Agriculture.

Wildlife Research Bulletin 1, which is illustrated by 3 colored plates, is available to the public by purchase (at 25 cents a copy) from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C.

Author Charles C. Sperry, a biologist of the Fish and Wildlife Service, points out that all the 5 shorebirds studied formerly were popular objects of sport, but that their populations were depleted by pothunters who shot excessive numbers of them for the market. Now only the woodcock and the jacksnipe may be hunted, during short open seasons.